

Podcast: What If World

[Episode 237: What if my cat, Dr. Jack Murphy PhD, had to tell the story?](#)

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Transcription by Keffy

[Rising harp scales followed by the What If World theme song.]

Lyrics: What if kittens played the glockenspiel? And what if unicorns were real? What if you could fly or travel back in time, we welcome you to What If World. What If World. This is What If World.

[Gentle bell music.]

Mr. Eric: Hey there, folks, and welcome back to What If World, the show where your questions and ideas inspire off-the-cuff stories. I'm Mr. Eric, your host, and today we're starting off with a question from a listener named Malcolm.

Malcolm: Hi, my name is Malcolm and I like cats and my question is what if Mr. Eric turned into a zombie and J.F. Kat and my cat, Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD, who is a cat therapist, had to tell the story? Bye! I love your show.

Mr. Eric: Oh, wow, Malcolm. What an inventive question. Just the thing is, I don't actually feel comfortable having this Dr. Jack Murphy PhD tell the story for me.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Mm, classic trust issues.

JF Kitty: Besides, Mr. Eric, they'll have me to help them.

Mr. Eric: Well, Jojo, I assumed you just napped through the whole story.

JF Kitty: Just because I'm currently curled up in your lap with my eyes closed doesn't mean I'm gonna nap through the story again!

Mr. Eric: I'm sorry, Jojo Fluffy Kat.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Overly apologetic, no surprise. You're a people pleaser.

Mr. Eric: What do you know about me, Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD, cat therapist?

Dr. Jack Murphy: I know that you've been putting off telling this story all day.

Mr. Eric: What?

JF Kitty: You have been awfully busy around the mouse—I mean, house.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, I had to do the dishes and the laundry and then there was that ring around the sink. Then I realized I had to take out the trash barrels 16 hours early, or else I might forget tomorrow.

Dr. Jack Murphy: A classic case of procatsination.

Mr. Eric: I'm not procrastinating! It's just that usually Karen's here or the kids, or grandma and they all wanted to give me time alone to tell a story today.

Dr. Jack Murphy: You can't do it, and you can't let your friends help, either.

JF Kitty: Where does that leave you, Mr. Eric? You're stuck!

Mr. Eric: How, what? I was just looking for another question, maybe to spice the story up a little.

JF Kitty: Quit looking at your phone! You've been checking that thing every 10 minutes.

Dr. Jack Murphy: The world won't disappear if you put your phone away, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: I know that! But, um, just having fun with the right second question, here.

Fred the Dog: Oh, I got one, I got one!

JF Kitty: Oh, come on, Fred! Do you have to be in every story?

Fred the Dog: No, but I gotta be in this one, see, here's this question.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Meow what kind of dog are you?

Fred the Dog: What a rude question to ask someone you just met, Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD. But if you must know, I'm a pug mixed with some other kind of dog with a longer snout, that's why my tongue's too long for my mouth.

JF Kitty: Come on, Fred, spill it! What's the question?

Fred the Dog: Oh! It's a write-in from our patron named Abdi. Abdi asks, what if Fred the Dog became an aeroplane and J.F. Kat took a ride on him?

JF Kitty: That sounds purr-fect!

Mr. Eric: See! Okay, you two are going to be busy so I'll just stay here and keep working on the story...

Fred the Dog: That sentence kind of trailed off, Mr. Eric. Don't you want to come take a ride on me as an airplane?

Dr. Jack Murphy: Doctor's orders, Mr. Eric. I must tell the story.

JF Kitty: Which means, you must take a break.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, I am taking a break...

Fred the Dog: Is he looking at his dog bone again?

JF Kitty: No, that's his smart phone.

Fred the Dog: It's just a phone? How could anything you can't chew on be that interesting?

Mr. Eric: Uh... swipe... uh.... swip... uh app... socialdoku...

JF Kitty: Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD, what's happening to him?

Dr. Jack Murphy: Oh, it's worse than I feared, darlings. He's gone from procatstination to ghostcatsination.

Fred the Dog: What? That sounds made up. What kind of Dr. PhD are you, anyway?

Dr. Jack Murphy: Only the most famous cat therapist in all of What If World.

Fred the Dog: Says who?

Dr. Jack Murphy: All of my exclusive clientele.

JF Kitty: It's not important, Fred. We've got to help Mr. Eric.

Fred the Dog: I know! I just don't think this cat who showed up out of nowhere can do a better job than the two of us!

Dr. Jack Murphy: Well, I've helped many famous cats. Of course I can't tell you their identities due to doctor-patient confidentiality.

JF Kitty: Purrcisely.

Dr. Jack Murphy: But I'll tell you their first names.

JF Kitty: What.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Of course there's Garfield, Nala, Simba, Mufasa...

Fred the Dog: Um...

Dr. Jack Murphy: Pudge... Aslan, Jojo...

JF Kitty: Must be another Jojo.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Felix, Liono – that’s one word, not their last initial, don’t worry. Hamilton, Hello, Grumpy, Tom, Cheshire, and of course, Cleocatra.

Fred the Dog: Wow! Those are some really important-sounding cats.

Dr. Jack Murphy: But I won’t tell you their last names, you cannot make me do it.

Fred the Dog: No, I understand. So tell me, Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD. What is ghostcatsination?

Dr. Jack Murphy: I see it in humans all the time. It’s like when a cat sees something through the window that they can’t get, but they keep pawing at it.

JF Kitty: Only the window is the human’s smart phone.

Fred the Dog: Which is very similar to a dog bone.

JF Kitty: Purrobably, but we’ll never know.

Dr. Jack Murphy: The human eventually enters a state of near suspended animation where everything they see and hear is of equal interest and disinterest.

Fred the Dog: That sounds serious, Doctor!

Dr. Jack Murphy: Oh, it is. And if they don’t snap out of their zombie-like state, they’ll start to ghostcatsinate every day for longer and longer.

JF Kitty: Will they still have time to pet me?

Fred the Dog: And tell stories?

JF Kitty: And nap next to me but not touching me?

Fred the Dog: And take me out for sticks, I mean, walks?

Dr. Jack Murphy: Mm, sometimes. But I’m afraid the condition will worsen until little is left of them but a ghost cat.

[Musical sting.]

Always pawing at their phone.

JF Kitty: We can’t let Mr. Eric succumb to ghostcatsination!

Fred the Dog: I'm going to just have to turn into an airplane and fly you both into What If World, okay?

Dr. Jack Murphy: And I'll stay here and naprate.

JF Kitty: Don't you mean narrate?

Dr. Jack Murphy: Oh, well...  
[Rising harp scale.]

Fred the Dog: [As if over a plane P.A. system] Okay, passengers, we're cruising at a height of 30,000 feet. If you look out the left side of the plane, you'll see fairies, space ships and other planes, all zipping around very close to us.

Fair Elise: You're not supposed to fly through our clouds.

Dracomax: I am not a plane. I just got stuck inside this jumbo jet.

JF Kitty: Shouldn't we fly some place less crowded.

Fred the Dog: We're experiencing a little turbulence. The fasten seat belt sign, in fact, is on.

Mr. Eric: Ooh, wordblocks...

JF Kitty: No, purr... whoa, are these seatbelts your tongue?

Fred the Dog: Safety first!

JF Kitty: Mr. Eric, you're so lucky you're a zombie.

Mr. Eric: Uh... Mariocraft.

Fred the Dog: And if you look out the right side of me, you'll see we've arrived at our final destination.

JF Kitty: But we're still 30,000 feet in the sky!

Fred the Dog: Just where we find the JammaLoo house, the perfect place to break Mr. Eric out of his funk.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Meow, J.F. Kat took Mr. Eric off the Fred the Dog plane and did something inside the house, but it's too early in the story for everything to be fixed so I'm just going to go back to sleep...

JF Kitty: Thanks for nothing, Doctor!

Dr. Jack Murphy: You're welcome. [Snores]  
[Doorbell]

Mamma Jamma: Hello! Oh, J.F. Kat and Mr. Eric. It's so nice to have visitors as we zoom through the sky at nearly the speed of sound.

JF Kitty: Would you please let us inside?

Mamma Jamma: Oh, where are my manners. Come right in!

Mr. Eric: Yeah, thanks.

JF Kitty: Listen, Fred the Dog flew us here for some reason! Do you know something that might shake Mr. Eric out of his ghostcatsination?

Mamma Jamma: Sounds serious.

JF Kitty: Oh, I'm pretty sure it is. Possibly. Or it's entirely made up.

Zizi: Oh, I know one of Mr. Eric's favorite things.

JF Kitty: Okay, Zizi! Spill the beans.

Zizi: Roleplaying games like Guilds & Goblins.

Zach: Yeah, it's where he learned how to be a storyteller.

JF Kitty: Okay, quick, role play him!

Zizi: It doesn't really work like that, right Zach?

Zach: Yeah, he can't be on his phone and enjoy a game with friends at the same time!

JF Kitty: Aw, but that's the problem in the first. Ugh, just do some Guilds & Goblins, right now!

Zizi: Oh, okay... Mr. Eric?

Mr. Eric: Oh?

Zizi: Who's your character?

Mr. Eric: Uh, crushcandy.

Zach: All right, uh... hi, Crushcandy. I'm Zachimedes... and I need your help saving the Land of Berend.

Mr. Eric: Yeah, sure Twitchtalk...

Zizi: That's right, Mr. Eric, Twitchtalk, the massive clockwork robot who wants to brainwash all the guilds is about to stomp you underfoot. Roll dare.

Mr. Eric: Let me just open my dice rolling app.

Zach: Oh, for crying out loud.

Mr. Eric: Five.

Zach: That's not a great roll.

JF Kitty: Don't say that. It is a great roll!

Zizi: Yeah... sure... because it's opposite dice day so your five is really a fifteen. You tip over Twitchtalk and win!

Zach: What? [Record scratch.] You don't win Guilds & Goblins, Zizi! It's collaborative storytelling!

Zizi: I don't know, I'm just doing what the cat tells me.

JF Kitty: Come on, Mr. Eric! You love geeky stuff like this!

Mr. Eric: Uh, geek culture's mainstream now.

JF Kitty: Well, purrbably not going to work this time, but I'd like to thank you, Zach and Zizi, and Mamma Jamma.

Poppa Loo: Well, what about me, Poppa Loo? I almost finished making my character.

JF Kitty: Sorry, our voices are too similar, I've got to go!

Poppa Loo: What? I don't sound like a cat. Do I?

Zach: No!

Zizi: Well...

Mamma Jamma: Only sometimes, honey.

Dr. Jack Murphy: And as I predicted, it didn't work. Oh, so they got back on the train.

JF Kitty: It's a plane!

Dr. Jack Murphy: Whatever you say.

Fred the Dog: Now, I'm assuming we can go back to What Is World because we just fixed everything.

JF Kitty: No, it didn't work, Fred.

Fred the Dog: What? Did you try calling him geeky?

Mr. Eric: Ooh, an ad for socks.

JF Kitty: See what I'm dealing with here?

Fred the Dog: Well, it's much worse than we thought, so we've got to go to a second location.

JF Kitty: Okay, just please don't make us...

Fred the Dog: The fasten your seatbelt sign effect is on, again.

JF Kitty: Gross.

[Scene break.]

Dr. Jack Murphy: They were in a wide room with matted floors and big mirrors. How terribly mundane.

JF Kitty: Come on, Dr. Jack. These mats are really fun to dig our claws into. So just stick around and keep narrating.

Dr. Jack Murphy: [Snoozing]

Alabaster Zero: No one naps in my Karanasty class.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Karawhat...

Fred the Dog: Mr. Eric used to teach karate and gymnastics, but I could only find one person who teaches them both at the same time.

Alabaster Zero: That's because there's only one person crazy enough to teach my style of Karanasty, and that's me, Alabaster Zero.

JF Kitty: Do you even know karate or gymnastics?

Alabaster Zero: But you can call me Mr. Sensei.

JF Kitty: I'd rather not.

Mr. Eric: Uh... sonicninjaform.



Alabaster Zero: Lesson one! No smart phones in class. Karanasty ruler chop! Oh, ooh...

Mr. Eric: Oh no, my high score.

Alabaster Zero: My hand and my back...

JF Kitty: Yeah, okay, this is a bust, Fred. Let's get to the third thing.

[Scene break.]

Petrina: Ah, Mr. Eric. You spent ten years growing up by the beach. There's nothing more calming and invigorating to you than the sounds of the sea.

Mr. Eric: Ugh, can't get WIFI out here.

[Record scratch.]

JF Kitty: Petrina the Pirate, he appears to be walking right towards the ocean.

Mr. Eric: Huh, this beach doesn't even have 5G.

Petrina: Aye, not what I expected, but let's watch it play out.

[Chime]

Mr. Eric: Uh, it's time for my productivity selfie. [Wave splashes] Oh, no! My phone! Where's my phone! Where... uh, what? What beach is this?

Fred the Dog: Folks we're looking out over beautiful, Fantastic Beach. It's just like Mr. Eric remembers it, only with less erosion and stinky seaweed.

Mr. Eric: Wow. I really needed to just dip my toes in this ocean for a minute. [Deep breath.]

JF Kitty: That's it? Zombie-ism cured?

Fred the Dog: It was technically ghostcatsination, but.

Dr. Jack Murphy: The color returned to Mr. Eric's face and his eyes unglossed. He even found himself getting a little sun on his skin.

Mr. Eric: Okay, I need the fantasy sunblock right away.

Petrina: Don't worry, I've got you covered, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Petrina! When did you get here?

Petrina: You mean to where I weigh anchor nine months out of the year?

Mr. Eric: Wow, okay, I'm sorry, Petrina. I was just having a really hard time telling the story today. Oh, I've still got so much to do.

Petrina: Not now, Mr. Eric. Just give yourself a few more minutes.

Mr. Eric: Okay, thanks.

Fred the Dog: And as you disembark the Freddieplane, you'll see sandpipers and seagulls, sunset and seaweed. Now, go ahead and smell that salt air, feel the sand with your toes, and listen to the sounds of the crashing waves.

Mr. Eric: [Deep, calming breath.] Okay, Fred. Fly me home. I think I'm ready to tell the story.

Dr. Jack Murphy: The end.  
[Falling harp scale.]

Mr. Eric: Whoops.

Dr. Jack Murphy: Well, Abdi and Malcolm, thank you for your questions.

Mr. Eric: And a big thanks to you, Dr. Jack Murphy, PhD, and my old friends Jojo and Fred for looking out for me today. I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, my producer Miss Lynn, and all you kids at home who know that taking time away from our devices is absolutely vital in the battle against ghostcatsination.  
  
Until we meet again, keep wondering.  
  
[What If World theme plays, but a little more calmly and with more harps.]